

# Life of the Spirit

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## Life of the Spirit

A review devoted to the theology and practice of prayer and the spiritual life, it is designed to assist in the re-establishment of the Catholic tradition of ascetical and mystical writing in the English language. Contributors are therefore encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers.

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# Life of the Spirit

Vol. I

JANUARY 1946

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## PRAYER WITHOUT CEASING

BY

DOM THEODORE BAILY, O.S.B.

*Sine intermissione orate* (I Thess, v, 17)



THE following notes have been suggested to the writer by the reading of *Récits sincères d'un pèlerin à son père spirituel*, a French translation<sup>1</sup> of a MS. found on Mount Athos and published at Kazan in 1882. They are set down here as they may be not without interest to others. Of this book Professor Arseniev writes (*Mysticism and the Eastern Church*): The experience of the old Oriental Fathers, those guides to the ascetic mystical life, as they are collected in the Philokalia, spring into fresh life in that remarkable monument of Russian folk mysticism of the middle of the nineteenth century. . . The Candid Narrative of a Pilgrim to his Confessor . . . is by a man of great capacity for intense inward prayer. This pilgrim is possessed by the sweetness of inward prayer and thereby his life is transfigured'. The Pilgrim heard one day, the words of the Epistle of St Paul to the Thessalonians read in church, 'Pray without ceasing', and failing to understand how this could be possible, gave himself no rest until he met a monk who not only explained them but taught him how to recite the 'Jesus Prayer', an ejaculation repeated 'without ceasing'.

The practice of ejaculatory prayer is of course of great antiquity. In India the repetition of the mystical syllable om, or the name of some god, or a phrase from the scriptures was long in use among Hindus and Buddhists. A certain magical power was attributed to such a name and formulas and their recitation supposed to effect a union between the devotee and the object of his worship. The Prasna and Mandukya Upanishads treat at some length of the meaning and virtue of om and its repetition. Thus the prayer of ejaculation from its earliest appearances had been simplified from a short sentence to a single name or even syllable.

It is tempting to speculate as to how much of the Vedantist philosophy reached Egypt and Greece, notably by means of the sages who visited Plotinus and endeavoured to persuade him to return with them to India. There are many witnesses to this form

<sup>1</sup> *Irenikon*, Tome IV. There are two English translations, one from *Irenikon*, published Burns Oates and Washbourne, and one from Russian, S.P.C.K.

of continual prayer in the desert. From the *Vita Antonii* of St Athanasius we know that 'he prayed continually, for he had heard "Pray and let it not be tedious to you".' Abba Epiphanius taught 'It is right for the monk who hath made himself to be remote from the world to be occupied with prayer to God unceasingly'—and he also said: 'Know thyself and thou shalt never fall. Give thy soul work, that is to say, constant prayer'. Of another of the Fathers, Abba Sisoës relates, 'Now this man's manner of life was marvellous and a certain man used to say about him, "I once wished to count the prayers which he made, and I saw that he did not cease to pray either by day or by night".' Cassian says that he had the tradition of the frequent repetition of the verse, *Deus in adiutorium meum intende* from those who *antiquissimorum patrum residui erant*, and St Augustine writing to the widow Proba says, *Dicuntur fratres in Aegypto crebras quidem orationes, sed eas brevissimas et raptim*, and adds, characteristically, *absit enim ab oratione multa locutio, sed non desit multa precatio, si fervens perseverat intentio*.

In his Rule for Monks St Benedict sums up and preserves for all time the ancient monastic tradition, and it is at first sight astonishing that the whole of his teaching on prayer could well be written on the back of a postcard. He lays down that prayer should be *instantissima, brevis et pura*, which certainly suggests ejaculation, as does his advice to the monk, *Orationi frequenter incumbere*, to give himself frequently to prayer. Prayer, he tells us in fine, should not be loud-voiced but be made with tears and compunction of heart. Abbot Marmion in his book, *Le Christ, Idéal du Moine*, understands the expression *instantissima oratione* to mean ejaculatory prayer, saying that this prayer, *qui doit si fréquemment intervenir le long de nos journées, ne sera pas nécessairement longue: se réduisant, le plus souvent à un simple élan vers Dieu; à nue étincelle spirituelle, elle ressemblera passablement par la forme à ce qu'on a appelé, en ces derniers siècles l'oraison jaculatoire*.

He alludes too in another place to the use of short phrases from the Liturgy and notably the verse *Deus in adiutorium* already mentioned and to which St Catherine of Siena was devoted. The use of some definite formula is of the greatest value in occupying and steadying the mind and imagination. A passage from one of Abbot John Chapman's letters is worth recalling in this connection. Writing to 'a literary man' (letter xvii) and treating of contemplation, he says: 'So to keep the imagination quiet, the best thing is to keep it in tune with the will and higher intellect, by very simple "acts". The mere *imagined words* give the imagination food; by sticking to them (the same act or many, as you like) the imagination may even get lazy, or almost mesmerised (for a short time usually). It is the *imagined sounds* which fill the imagination and (I suppose) other filmy images connected with them. That is



why very expressive words are best; either expressive in sense (as "O God, I want thee and nothing but thee"), or by beauty of sound (say, some verse of the Psalms, *Exultabunt labia mea cum cantavero tibi, et anima mea quam redimisti*, is an excellent "tag"), because there is association of ideas between such sounds and the almost imperceptible clinging of the will to God'.

With the foregoing by way of introduction, we come to the consideration of the Jesus-prayer itself, well known and widespread in what was once holy Russia and the Christian East. In the West and Latin Christendom it is curiously unknown. This may be accounted for by the fact that it was introduced into Italy by Pelagius or Marinus, a Greek monk and one time spiritual master of St Romuald, a vestige of this remains in the Camaldolese form of rosary; and by St Nilus first living near Monte Cassino and then at Grottaferrata. The Vallambrosians have or had once the same tradition from their founder, St John Gualbert, who had visited St Romuald at Camaldoli. Neither of these two congregations of monks however flourished outside Italy owing to the then preponderant prestige of Cluny, hence their influence was little felt in the West.

As for the form and method of the Jesus-prayer, the instruction given to the pilgrim by the hermit whom he met is as good as any. 'Continual interior prayer to Jesus is a constant and uninterrupted calling upon the divine name of Jesus with the lips, in the mind, and in the heart; it is the realisation of his constant presence and the asking for his grace, during all our occupations, always and in all places, even during sleep. This prayer is composed of the following words: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!" Whoever uses this prayer finds in it so great a consolation and so insistent a need to repeat it constantly, that he cannot live without it, and without its resounding in him, so to speak, of its own accord'. Advice as to the manner of recitation is quoted from the writings of St Simeon the New Theologian, 'Sit by yourself alone and in silence. Lower the head and shut the eyes, breathe gently and imagine yourself looking into your heart. Withdraw into the heart all the thoughts of your mind. Draw in your breath and say: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!" Say this softly with the lips, or say it mentally. Strive to put away all other thoughts. Be still, be patient, and repeat it as often as you can'. The pilgrim describes how he became gradually proficient, repeating with the intaking of the breath, 'Lord Jesus Christ', and breathing out 'have mercy on me!' This he did at first many times a day then for an hour at a time and finally nearly all day long. He then associated the prayer with his heart-beat, pronouncing for each beat a word of the prayer, which thus ended by becoming spontaneous, 'resounding within him, so to speak, of its own accord'. The use and control of the breath is so much insisted upon by Indian ascetics that the linking of the ejaculations with the breath-

ing and beating of the heart, seems to suggest an origin further east than the deserts of Egypt and Palestine; the finding as it were a physical basis for a spiritual or supra-physical action as in the practice of Yoga.

Another resemblance to Indian asceticism is the stress laid upon the necessity for a spiritual master; the pilgrim is warned that this inward prayer cannot meet with success unless he has the direction of an Elder. Just as in India, the Guru was of the first and last importance, so we find Nicephorus, the monk, writing: 'During the practice of the inward activity of the heart, a genuine and well-informed director is required. If such a one is not at hand, then diligently seek one'. Thus, too, Macarius of Optino, the famous *staretz* of the last century, writes in his letters of direction: 'The first requisite condition is access to an experienced spiritual director; absolute obedience to him comes next'. He underlines, too, the importance of humility and purity of heart. The same advice regarding humility, it may be noted in passing, was given to Seraphim of Sarov when as a young man he went into the wilderness: 'Humble your mind until your heart burns and resounds with the Jesus-prayer. Pray constantly'.

Many excellences have been claimed for this kind of prayer, among others St John the Karpathanian writes that when the clause, 'Have mercy on me (a sinner)', is repeated, to every such repetition God's voice answers secretly, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee'. The form, too, has been considered specially adapted to constant use, the reason given being that it is composed of two parts. In the first the soul is led to the life of Christ, which as the Fathers teach, contains the whole Gospel in brief, and in the second, it is faced with its own sinfulness, helplessness and need for grace and mercy, it is the justifying prayer of the publican wherein humility calls upon the divine compassion and draws down a blessing. 'Only those who always feel like the publican at prayer, or the prodigal on his way home, can practise it (the Jesus-prayer) with impunity', writes Macarius of Optino. 'It is good only for the man whose heart sorrows deeply and whose mind is free from worldly chatter; for the mouth that feeds on pig-swill may not feed on the holy name.' The pilgrim encourages his companion to practise the prayer as frequently as possible, adding that, 'At the end of a certain time you will experience in your heart a subtle and delightful sweetness, with which it will be enkindled and softened'. This is a strange echo of Richard Rolle's fire and sweetness.

One is inevitably reminded of the hymn, *Jesu dulcis memoria dans vera cordi gaudia: sed super mel et omnia eius dulcis praesentia*. The mind concentrating upon the name of God, *memoria*, is comforted and enlightened and thus persevering finally lays hold of the Master's feet, as it were, realising his intimate presence in the secret places of the soul, that Kingdom of God that is within. Mr Huxley in his, *The Perennial Philosophy*, has



pointed out a curious parallel to this idea in the Buddhist scriptures, it occurs in the Surangama Sutra and is as follows: 'Moreover whoever recites the name of Amitabha Buddha, whether in the present time or the future time, will surely see the Buddha Amitabha and never become separated from him'.

Not the least virtue of the prayer, indeed, is that it centres upon the divine name, which gives to it the fragrance and savour experienced by those who devote themselves to it: *mel in ore, auri melos, dulcia cordi iubila*. English readers will find themselves here on more familiar ground since the devotion to the name of Jesus was so much a mark of our own mystics. 'For thou shalt think joy to hear the name of *Jesu* named', writes Rolle, 'sweetness to speak it, mirth and song to think on it. If you think on *Jesu* continually and hold it stably, it purgeth sin, it kindleth thy heart, it clarifieth thy soul, it openeth heaven, it maketh contemplative men. Have *Jesu* often in mind; for all vices and phantoms it putteth from the lover of it.' Much more, too, especially in his meditation on the words, *Oleum effusum nomen tuum*. A last quotation perhaps will not be out of place from the *Cloud of Unknowing*, in the 21th chapter, 'Of the special prayers of them that be continual workers in the work of this book', the author writes, 'and if they be in words, as they be but seldom, then be they in full few words: yea and the fewer the better. Yea, and if it be but a little word of one syllable, methinks it is better than one of two, and more according to the work of the spirit; since a ghostly worker in this work should evermore be in the highest and sovereignest point of the spirit. And therefore it is written that *short prayer pierceth heaven*'.

It need hardly be added that the ways of God with souls are infinitely various, that no two souls are alike either in their gifts or the circumstances in which they find themselves. The science of prayer built as it is upon the general experience with its gradations and classifications must needs present a norm or average. The country must be mapped out, but the paths of the many wayfarers are diverse, no two the same. God works in each soul perfecting it according to its own special character, drawing out its latent potencies, making use even of its very vices and frailties. Most of all perhaps is this the case with prayer, *alii sic, alii vero sic*, each traveller goes his own road, each man speaks to his God in the language of his own heart. Nor is the same soul constant in this, but changes with greater knowledge, greater experience and under the impulse of grace. Always the Spirit breathes where he wills, his attractions and outpourings are not for measure or calculation. He is the Lord of his own gifts, giving and withholding as it pleases him, and how it pleases him. *Sit nomen Domini benedictum*.

# LANGLAND'S WAY TO UNITY

BY

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.



LANGLAND'S outlook is really centred in the doctrine of the Mystical Body, though he nowhere employs the term itself. He conceives of the Church and her members in this living corporate way. From the very fact of the Incarnation, all mankind has become related to God in common brotherhood, even those outside the Church.

But my nature shall move me to be merciful to man

For we are brethren of one blood though not in baptism together

are words of our Lord at the harrowing of hell (*Passus XVIII*, 397-8). Men are not only blood brethren because they bear the same nature with the same human blood coursing through their veins, but also because they have been bought by the outpouring of that blood made precious in union with the divinity:

'They are my blood brethren', said Piers, 'for God bought all men'. (*Passus VI*, 212; cf. *XVIII*, 343 sqq.)

And again:

For we are all Christ's creatures, and by his coffer are we wealthy.

And brothers of one blood, beggars and nobles. (*Passus XI*, 201). Those who would avail themselves of this fraternal blood, which links together as blood in the veins joins the cells of a living body, are baptized in the blood of Christ, thus fulfilling their vocation by becoming his 'whole brethren':

But none who are my whole brethren in blood and baptism

Shall there be damned to death everlasting (*Passus XVIII*, 399). Here we have the deepest 'moral' of Piers Plowman, that all men, Christians and Pagans, should enter into Unity. The conversion to Unity here does not indicate the conversion from paganism or heresy to the dogmas of the true Church. He is writing for men who have been cradled in the Church's bosom. The Church appears at the beginning:

'I am Holy Church', she said, 'and you should know me.

I first found you. My faith I taught you.

You brought me pledges to be at my bidding,

And to love me loyally while life lasted' (*Passus I*, 76-80).

All those Englishmen were members of the Church into which they had been baptized within a few hours of their birth. But mere physical membership, almost inevitable in those days, was no guarantee of salvation. This Langland insisted upon particularly for the lax clergy who constructed the Church, but who, like the



Therefore I counsel you clerks, who are the wrights of Holy Church,

Work the works that you see written, and be wary that you come into it. (*Passus* X, 429 et sqq.).

Thus not only do 'holiness and honesty come out of Holy Church through the lives of holy men', but all evils emanate as well from her through the imperfection of her ministers. (*Passus* XV, 95).

The last two *Passus*, therefore, concerning the best form of Christian life, the life of Dobest, insist on a true conversion to Unity in the Church, not merely by physical membership, but by union in the life of grace which has been called the 'life-blood' of the Mystical Body.

With this Grace began to make a good foundation,  
And wattled it and walled it with his pains and passion.

With all Holywrit he made a roof afterwards,  
And called that house Unity, or Holy Church in English. . . .

Then Conscience addressed all Christians: 'My counsel is presently

To hasten into unity and hold us within it' . . .

The purification of the people and a pure clergy

Made holiness the unity of Holy Church.

(*Passus* XIX, 330-333, 360-1, 385-6).

The visionary and his allegorical characters are constantly urging all Christians 'to hold themselves in Unity', and that is principally effected by learning to love (cf. *Passus* XX, 241-249). Love, Charity, is the spirit of the Church which gathers together into one all her true and living members and so fashions Unity. (id. 201-210). Learning or religious life are helpless without the bond of union, though the friars may treat them as talismans for salvation. This applies also to 'pardons' and to the sacraments. We shall notice later on how very characteristic this attitude is with all these English mystics, as for example Hilton—'for Christ is head of Holy Church, and therefore he departeth not the oil of grace but to his members, the which are fastened to his ghostly body by truth, hope and charity'.<sup>1</sup>

Before leaving this general view that greets the renewed soul as it goes through the door of conversion we must insist on the one central figure of our Lord as depicted by Langland. The person of Christ seen by the poet stands for the quiet and restrained, austere hierarchic figure of early Christian art and prayer. We find here little of the 'realistic' devotion to the humanity of Christ typical of that day. Naturally he treats the Passion and the Redemption in the terms of medieval chivalry already used by the *Ancren Riwle*

<sup>1</sup> *Benedictus*. Orchard Series ed. p. 219. Cf. the whole of this passage, and *Bonum Est*, id. p. 209; *The Scale*, ii, 3, p. 182; *Mother Julian*, cc. 9, 31, 34, 51, etc.: *Cloud*, c. 25. Also *Blackfriars*, March 1940, p. 192, *The Clergy Review*, March 1943.

nearly two centuries earlier.<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus should joust for the judgment of knighthood  
(*Passus XVI*, 139).

This gentle Jesus will joust in Piers' armour

In his helm and habergin, *humana natura* (*Passus XVIII*, 23-4).  
This knight who jousts at the tournament of the Cross, bold and resolute, hardly appeals to the softer human feelings, but judges severely his own contemporaries at the time of the critical trial of strength:

'You are Churls', said Jesus, 'and your children like you,  
And Satan your saviour as yourselves witness . . .

'I find falsehood in your fair speaking,  
Guile in thy glad cheer and gall in thy laughing. . . '

(*Passus XVI*, 168 sqq.).

After witnessing his numerous miracles amid the sick and the lame and after the raising of Lazarus, his followers describe his position on earth as 'the leach of life and the Lord of high heaven' (*Passus XVI*, 164).

One explanation for this awe-inspiring delineation of Christ may be found in the nature of the poem which sets out to turn men from the path of vice; and this requires an element of fear. But that is not the last word, for his insistence on Love in the unity of the Church from another pen would have called forth a more 'devotional' picture of Jesus. The restraint of the Liturgy had certainly a profound influence on Langland, however much he may have sung Lauds for stipends and played bedesman to the nobility. And the newly converted soul should turn directly and without hindrance to that loving figure of the High Priest, and of the Lamb standing as it were slain round whom the whole picture of Christian life centres.

The general manner of living in the Church becomes more distinct as one watches the busy Christians intent on their journey. Standing at the door of conversion we can see nearest to us a group of men and women low down at the foot of the hill making painful and often rather feeble efforts to master the first piece of rising ground, further ahead and higher up there is quite a bunch practically half-way up, and finally a few climbing the steep crags near the summit. The dividing line between each group is necessarily arbitrary and man-made. But, as we have noticed before, the division is threefold among all these writers even though their mode of division differs. Langland's threefold division is very singular and in many ways more profound than the others, with the possible exception of Walter Hilton, who sets out to deal *ex professo* with these ways.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the beautiful passage in the *Ancoren Riwele* part vii (Medieval Lib. ed., p. 296) where our Lord is shown as the knight of great prowess, proving his love for the soul in the tournament of the Cross. Cf. also *Piers Plowman* *Passus XVI*, 211-5; *XVIII*, 13-39.



We have seen that the Vision of Piers Plowman is based almost as much as the *Scale* upon the division into the three lives of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest. These have their background, as it were, in the life of the Trinity itself. The principal ground of the first mode of life is God the Father who is Truth and sets the soul in Truth by his grace—here we find the characteristic life of the good *layman*, a converted and supernaturalised Active Life. Dobet is based on the second divine Person, made man and sent to teach and suffer,—here is typified the *priest*, the 'alter Christus', or, we might add, the *religious*, and is characteristic of Contemplative Life. Finally Dobest looks to the Holy Spirit, who infuses the perfection of charity into the soul—this is officially represented by the life of a *bishop*, who is consecrated to a form which blends the active and the contemplative lives as he is the official teacher and administrator of the Church (*Passus* IX, 224 sqq.). This has striking similarities with the scholastic teaching, and with the teaching of St Thomas in particular, on the progress of the spiritual life; and it raises some of the problems which we shall leave to Hilton to settle for us. But here in the first view of the 'Three Ways' we must outline the nature of the division with its consequent problems. Hilton distinguishes between 'State' and 'Life' in the same way as St Thomas. The distinction itself is of great importance for understanding these earlier mystics. It also helps to solve the general practical problem of how to relate the activist type of life which is demanded of most people today and the contemplative ideal. Langland will in fact be useful to us here in broaching the problem, for his theological background reveals a difficulty which until his time had been passed over. If the growth of the Christian soul can be divided in the three ways, how are those three to be fitted into the twofold division of Christian life into active and contemplative (cf. *Passus* XVI, 63 sqq.)? Piers is describing the tree of the Trinity upon which depends the true Christian life. This tree, he tells us, has three kinds of fruit varying in goodness; yet he describes only two main groups, the contemplatives and the actives; the former are inspired by the Holy Spirit and the latter live 'in Nature' according to the flesh. This at once provokes Langland to ask:

'Yea, sire', I said, 'but since there are but two lives

Allowed by our Lord, as the learned teach us,

*Activa Vita* and *Vita Contemplativa*,

Why grows the fruit in three kinds?' 'For a good reason', he answered.

'And now I may take from beneath, if the need arises,

Matrimony, a moist fruit, which multiplies the people.

Then above is a better fruit, though both are pleasant,

Widowhood, held worthier than wedlock in heaven.

But virginity is more virtuous than the fairest thing in heaven . . .'

(*Passus* XVI, 95-102).

These three fruits of Matrimony, Widowhood and Virginitie a few lines before have been classed by Piers as contemplative in so far as they were seeking the Holy Ghost. These wedded men, widows and maidens are contrasted with the people who live in Nature and who follow as the flesh leads—*Activa Vita* (id. 85-94). It would appear from this that Langland classes the three degrees of the Good Life all together as Contemplative. Outside this lies the Active or evil life. This at least seems to be implied in Piers's explanation, and through Piers Langland communicates his deepest convictions.<sup>3</sup>

Yet Langland elsewhere makes other suggestions. 'Clergy' teaches (in *Passus* X, 238) that Dowel is the Active Life of farmers and craftsmen who simply carry out their normal manual work as best they can; Dobet is a life of almsgiving and works of mercy; while Dobest teaches others to do these works at the same time that he practises them himself, and this is the life of a bishop. 'Thought' and 'Wit' both attempt to classify the differences between these three Good Lives (*Passus* VIII and IX), and the debauched doctor of divinity endorses the words of 'Clergy' (*Passus* XIII, 215). It may be noticed that all these descriptions are practically limited to the exercise of the virtues which concern the neighbour and are generally characteristic of the Active Life. At the same time Langland restricts *Vita Activa* to a rather mean place when he comes to treat of it at length in *Passus* XIII (238 sq.); the part is played by a well-intentioned wafer-manufacturer, full of energy and good motives, but besmirched with unwholesome sins.

We may conclude from these descriptions that Langland classed the active life in its lowest form as a purely 'natural' living according to the flesh and at best as something approaching the well-meaning, busy life usually described by the mystical writers as 'active'. On the other hand his three, Dowel, Dobet and Dobest, are the types of good life, supernatural rather than natural, guided by the Holy Spirit. The first stage may be to some extent identified with the better sort of active life; but on the whole all three could be regarded as Contemplative in so far as they are supernatural and devoted ultimately to God. He does in fact describe three stages of the beginner, the proficient and the perfect in the devout life. This is characteristically active, concerned directly with fellow

<sup>3</sup> This is the view taken by Skeat in a note on C Text, in which alone this passage appears. Others have interpreted only the maiden as the contemplative like the monk or the nun, and deny that Matrimony, Widowhood and Virginitie can possibly stand here for Dowel, Dobet and Dobest. In the A text which is not here included by Wells, Wit treats Dowel, Dobet and Dobest as *states* and points out that perfection does not depend on one's state. This approaches more accurately the teaching of St Thomas on the subject. Cf. Rolle, *The Form of Living*, c. 3. (Heseltine ed., p. 24) and Dunning, *Piers Plowman, An Interpretation of the A Text*. (pp. 173 sq.) And Coghill, *Medium Aevum*, Vol II, No. 2. (p. 126).



human beings though based on God and the love of God. Such an active conception of the three ways was perhaps inevitable in a poem cast in so essentially social a mould. Even in the life of Dobest Langland is concerned with the conversion of England to social justice based on charity. For the purposes of the present work, therefore, Langland's contribution is most valuable in the social and liturgical spheres seen in terms of the first Conversion.

In the description of the way to Truth Langland introduces all the elements necessary for the first stage of the spiritual life—Grace, Contrition, the Creed, and all the moral virtues such as Abstinence, Humility and Chastity. There are warnings too against Pride and Wrath, both stumbling-blocks in the way of the beginner, Dowel, immediately after his conversion. The full state of the beginner is best described by the *Ancren Riwele*. We may therefore conclude with a summary of the characteristics of these three ways in the eyes of Langland. Nevil Coghill (*Medium Aevum* Vol. II, No. 2) has collated the passages which describe Dowel, Dobet and Dobest (fifteen in all), and he sums up the results of this collation:

The life of Dowel is inexhaustible in itself and is sufficient for salvation; it is a life of Faith and Work, the life of the manual worker and layman, to live which he must be humble, temperate, obedient to the Church, honest, compassionate, fearing God and loving men with a warm neighbourly love. He must know and believe in the simple elements of the Christian faith . . . Dobet adds nothing to Dowel except the following: he is a Contemplative or Clerk who teaches, heals and suffers, and lives in accordance with what he professes. . . . The virtues over and above those of Dowel and Dobet are simply these: to exercise episcopal authority, for the protection of the simple, the abashing of the wicked, and the maintaining of the sacramental life of the Church (particularly are mentioned the sacraments of Penance and of the Altar . . .) The life of Dobest is in fact that which cares for the salvation of men through the right administration of the instituted Christian Church'.

In the last passage in which Langland compares the three lives he applies them to the life of our Lord. Our Lord began the life of Dowel when he turned water into wine, for wine stands for law and a holy life; he taught us to love our enemies and was known as the Son of Mary. As Dobet his life was one of the ministry, healing, comforting; and this included the Crucifixion and Resurrection, and he was known as the Son of David. As Dobest our Lord gave Piers authority to bind and loose and instituted the authority of the Church by sending the Paraclete (*Passus* XIX, 106 sqq.). Here he establishes fully the new law of Love—one of the themes of the Whole Vision—where Truth is completely discovered. This law transcends the multifarious laws of the Old Dispensation.

And make a labourer of law, and love shall arise  
 And such a peace and perfect truth be with the nations  
 (*Passus III, 422-4*).

That law shall be a labourer and led afield to dunging,  
 But the love of kind and Conscience shall come together  
 And love shall lead your land to your best liking  
 (*Passus IV, 156-7. cf. XVII, 9 sqq.*).

Conversion opens the way to love and love to contemplation.

Nearly every line of this great poem will bear much fruit in meditation, and it will lead to a more perfect understanding of the spiritual life. It was written by one whose own experience of genuine conversion was based on a sound theological background. He may have picked up this theological knowledge from the many sermons he must have heard. If so they were doctrinally impressive discourses, and if there are any such today the newly converted soul should seek them out and nourish the new life within him in this same manner.

## SON OF MAN

BY

COLUMBA CARY-ELWES, O.S.B.



F all the titles of Jesus this is the most mysterious, yet also it was the one most used by him, the title of his predilection.

Christ is called Son of Mary; and that is not difficult to understand. She gave him as much as any mother ever gives her child, his body, his features, temperament maybe. Mary must have given all these, for there was no human father. Thus Nestorius was indeed wrong-headed when he refused her the title of Mother of God. We do not say of our mothers 'That is the mother of Charles's body', but 'that is Charles's mother', i.e., the person Charles; so Mary is the mother of the Person Christ, and the Person is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Son of David, likewise we can understand; though even this is not simple, for he was not so by direct male descent. Still, he was sufficiently descended by blood through Mary, and far more deeply so by inheriting the kingdom; and yet again, not the kingdom of the earthly Jerusalem, but that of the spiritual Jerusalem. It was for this reason that David recognised his pre-eminence and called him Lord, being king over a greater inheritance (cf. *P's. 110, and Hebrews*).

But the title of 'Son of Man' was an enigma. Sometimes the phrase was used in Aramaic merely to mean 'I'. So is it used by Christ. But often enough, both in the Old and New Testaments,



it has the meaning 'mere man'<sup>1</sup>, 'wretched man that I am', having a depreciative sense. That is the meaning throughout Ezechiel. It is significant that the three times Jesus refers to his coming Passion, each time he uses this phrase: 'And he began to teach them that the Son of Man had to suffer many things'.<sup>2</sup> This idea of the Son of Man being, as it were, obliged to suffer naturally recalls the prophecies of the Suffering Servant, the outcast of men, in the Book of Isaias.<sup>3</sup> This title is a link with that side of the personality of the Messias.

But in Daniel the title takes on a quite different significance: it means the Saviour who was to come in glory. Could Christ ever be referring to this meaning, he a carpenter, an itinerant preacher, who often enough slept under the sky with a stone for a pillow? He was no resplendent world-saviour,<sup>4</sup> and yet in a sense he did lay claim to this title.

There came a moment in Christ's life when it was his duty to explain himself, when it was the duty likewise of those who heard to believe. It was a duty for Christ, for the Sanhedrin was the God-appointed body ruling the Jews; a duty for them 'for no one can do these signs . . . unless God be with him', as one of their number, Nicodemus, clearly saw. (*John*, 3.) The moment was the night before his Passion. In order to get the full force of the questions and answers it is necessary to take the Lucan version and fill it out with St Mark at one point:

'If thou be Christ, tell us'.

And he said to them: 'If I shall tell you, you will not believe me; and if I shall also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go.<sup>5</sup> But hereafter the Son of Man shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God' . . . 'and coming on the clouds of heaven'.

Add SS. Matthew and Mark:

Then they said all: 'Art thou then the Son of God?'

Who said: 'You say that I am'.

There can be no doubt that here Christ is referring to himself, not simply as 'I', nor as the 'wretched man', the 'worm and no man' of Isaias, but as the resplendent saviour; for the qualifying clause sitting 'on the right hand of the power of God, coming on the

1 Cf. *Job* 25:5-6. 'Behold even the moon is without light, the stars are not pure in his eyes; how much less man, that little worm, the son of man, that vile insect'.

2 *Mk.* 8:31. Cf. *Matth.* 17:22 and *Luke* 18:31.

3 *Isaias* 42:1-4; 49:1-6. Cf. Lemonnier, *Théologie du Nouveau Testament*, pp. 65 ff.

4 It is usually held that this 'Son of Man' in Daniel referred to the whole Jewish people, But (a) Christ uses it of himself; (b) he is the fifth of a series, the first four being individual kings, and (c) whether we accept the implications or not in ideas, the phraseology, the imagery, is similar to the Zoroastrian literature concerning the Son of Man, a superhuman, yet human, saviour.

5 He is referring to his discussion with them on Psalm 110 about the Son of David.

clouds of heaven' is straight from a famous vision of the more-than-human saviour seen and described by Daniel the prophet:

'I looked until the moment when thrones were placed and when an ancient sat. His clothing was white as snow and the hair of his head was like clean wool. His throne was flames of fire; the wheels burning fire. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him; a thousand thousand served him, and myriads stood before him. The judge sat and books were opened. . . . I gazed at the visions of the night, and upon the clouds came, as it were, a Son of Man; he came forward up to the Ancient, and he was made to approach before him. And there was given him power, glory and rule, and all peoples, nations and tongues serve him. His power is an eternal power that shall not pass, and his rule shall never be destroyed'.

The strange part of this vision is its mixture of human and divine. Here alone is it clearly insinuated in the Old Testament that the Saviour was to be God-like, if not God. Indeed, so strange did this idea seem to the Jews, who conceived of the Messiah as a Man born of David's stock, that this juxtaposition of the two titles by Christ, that night before the Sanhedrin, came to that body as a great and startling surprise. That Jesus should claim to be Christ, the Messiah, was bad enough; but that the Christ should be Son of Man in the sense of the vision of Daniel, that meant that Jesus claimed to be 'Son of God'. It is the book of Daniel that explains the leap from Christ's claim to be the Son of Man, to their accusing question: 'Ithou art then the Son of God?' His affirmative reply was doubly shocking and blasphemous to them, first because they could not conceive God, the One Almighty God, as having a Son, and secondly, even worse, that this Son should be incarnate. This was the stumbling-block to the Jews. The foolishness that the Gentiles, or Hellenic world, saw in Christ was to come next, that this god-incarnate should die upon a gibbet. Meekness and humility, fruits of the knowledge of our weakness, were no natural virtues among the ancients, any more than they are among the modern Pagans.

And yet in that one title, so carefully chosen out of so many by Christ, was the explanation of both his greatness and his coming humiliation. The Jews should have accepted his reading of the Vision of Daniel, the Gentiles should have understood how the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant, the 'worm and no man', was taking their place, carrying their sins. They should, in humility and with tears, have read the vision of the other and greater prophet Isaiah, where the Man of Sorrow was to bear the sufferings of us all.



# BLESSED ANNA MARIA TAIGI, A MYSTIC IN THE FAMILY

BY

H. C. GRAEF



SIENA may be called the city of unusual vocations. There is St Catherine, who brought back the Pope from Avignon and was espoused to our Lord; St Bernardine, ardent Apostle of the Name of Jesus, and, very near our own time, Bl. Anna Maria Taigi, mother of a large family, mystic and confidante of Popes. She was born in the same year as Napoleon (1769) with whose family she was later brought into close relation. Unlike in this to her great compatriot, she gave no early signs of future sanctity. She was the daughter of an apothecary, a spendthrift who went to Rome with his family when Anne was six. She was sent to a convent school where she learned embroidery and afterwards her father found her a job as housemaid with a rich lady of doubtful reputation. In her house she spent three years, learning all the secrets of female vanity and becoming conscious of her own attraction for men. It was a perilous position for a poor and pretty young girl, and the dangers were not altogether removed even when, in 1790, she married Domenico Taigi, a valet in the Palazzo Chigi, considerably older than herself. During the first year of her marriage she fully gave herself up to the pleasures of the world; her husband bought her trinkets and fine dresses and took her to dances and other amusements. It was the time when Europe was shaken by the French Revolution, and soon she began to feel strange scruples about the life of vanity and empty pleasures which she was leading. One day a Servite priest met her, walking in the road with Domenico, and he heard an interior voice saying to him: 'Look at this woman. I shall one day entrust her to you. You will convert her because I have chosen her for a Saint'.

At the end of the year, soon after the birth of her first child, Anne went to confession to a Servite Father unknown to her and was received with the words: 'So you have come at last. Be of good cheer, my child; God loves you, and in return he asks for your whole heart'. From that day a new life began for her; a life lived in the most humdrum circumstances of a numerous family, harassed by crushing work and constant poverty which she met with the most absolute trust in divine Providence which, indeed, never failed her. Yet this to all appearances quite ordinary life was pervaded by the supernatural life of grace, by grace that is not hindered by material obstacles, but rather uses them as the consummate sculptor uses a block of marble, transforming the hard bulk of the stone into a wonder of spiritual beauty.

Here was a chosen soul, not in the cloister protected by rules, reminded of her Creator at all hours of day and night by bells,

Office and periods of prayer, but in a small house, with an exacting husband, a cantankerous mother, and an increasing number of children and later also of grandchildren, all depending on her for food, dress, cleanliness and the innumerable requirements of a large household. How is it possible to lead the most exalted mystical life in such circumstances?

Shortly after her conversion Anna Maria was told by our Lady that it was her special vocation to show to the world that sanctity can be attained in every walk of life, even without extraordinary bodily penances, but on one condition: the perfect mortification of self-will. It seems that this was precisely the reason why divine Providence had placed her in a position so apparently unfavourable to the development of the mystic life. She fulfilled the condition to perfection. She served her husband with the utmost humility, obeying him as if he were the Lord himself, leaving bishops and princesses who came to consult her in order to undo Domenico's shoes when he came home and to place his dinner on the table. She bore with her gossiping mother who spoiled her children, and whom she nursed in a repulsive illness without receiving a word of thanks in return; she supported her father who refused to work; she brought up her three boys and four girls and she kept the peace in a house full of the most violent and divergent temperaments. Where, in this overcrowded life, could there be a place for contemplative prayer?

Yet mystic graces were showered on her almost from the beginning of her conversion. From that time all through her life she enjoyed the same extraordinary gift as St Hildegard: she saw before her a 'mystic sun', a brilliant globe of light encircled by a crown of thorns in which she read the future as well as events in distant places with perfect clarity; but she never used this gift unless charity or obedience demanded it. During the first years of her mystic life ecstasies were frequent: suddenly, while she was at table or doing housework, her eyes would close, her limbs grow rigid, and Domenico would angrily shout at her: why must she go to sleep in the middle of the day?—but there was no answer. The children would cry, thinking their mother was dead. After Holy Communion she was almost always in ecstasy, and our Lord often appeared to her in the Blessed Sacrament. After she had been received into the Third Order of the Holy Trinity, which she had chosen because of her ardent devotion to this greatest of the Christian mysteries, he revealed to her her special vocation: 'Know', he said, 'that I have chosen you to convert sinners and to console those who suffer in every walk of life, priests and religious and even my Vicar himself. You will meet with falsehood and perfidy, you will be mocked, despised and calumniated, but you will endure it all for love of me'.

The prophecy was soon to be fulfilled. After the joyous spring of her spiritual life, rich with sensible graces, there followed dark



years of desolation. She had the most violent temptations to doubt and even to hatred of God, and seemed no longer to know the meaning of love. She seemed to herself completely abandoned by the divine mercy, feeling as if confined to a corner of hell, though, strangely enough, her supernatural lights never failed her. At the same time she was overwhelmed with exterior trials: priests refused her Holy Communion, neighbours accused her of secret sins, and she was afflicted by mysterious and very painful illnesses. For it seems that God opposed the humble housewife to Napoleon, who imprisoned the Pope and persecuted the Church, as a victim of expiation. She foretold his fall with precise details and knew the most intimate sentiments of the dying Emperor. In 1815 his mother, Madame Letizia, and his brother Cardinal Fesch came to live near her in Rome, and under the influence of Anne, whom they venerated, both became devout. One day, when the Cardinal asked her to pray for the recovery of his sister, she answered with the holy liberty of the saints: 'Tell her Highness to meditate on these three points: what she has been, what she is, and what she will be, and at the same time to prepare herself for death'. Yet she was not strong enough to overcome their longings to revive past greatness, and in 1831 they prepared to dethrone Gregory XVI and to crown Napoleon's son Emperor of Rome. Anne, who like St Catherine endured agonies for the Church, saw their preparations in her mystic sun, denounced the plot to the authorities, and paid for the delivery by untold sufferings. The same happened when the peace of the Church was threatened by socialism and the machinations of the Carbonari, in fulfilment of our Lord's words to her: 'I have chosen you to be counted among my martyrs by an invisible martyrdom. None will know, none will understand, only I'.

The mystery of expiation by suffering is a difficulty to many who yet accept without questioning the expiation of the Cross and the claim of St Paul to have been counted worthy to fill up in his body on behalf of the Church what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. Yet from the time of the martyrs, whose blood the Fathers called the 'seed of the Church', the Church has always counted on the sufferings of her members to continue the work of her Head. The faith was spread throughout Europe by martyrs and the heroic sufferings of confessors. To the mystery of iniquity there will be always opposed the mystery of suffering, to the Tree of Forbidden Knowledge the Tree of the Cross, to infidelity self-sacrifice, to the lust and cruelty of the great the pains and penances of the humble. This is the mysterious and hidden law of the supernatural world, of which we are sometimes allowed glimpses in the lives of the Saints, though they are rarely so clear as in the lives of St Catherine or Bl. Anne Taigi. Both cooperated to the full with the designs of divine Providence; for Anne, too, never allowed herself any distractions to alleviate her trials. She understood perfectly our Lord's words to her, which sound almost as if they came from

St Catherine's *Dialogue*: 'True sanctity consists in bearing patiently interior and exterior trials. A soul which suffers patiently the tribulations which come to her through the medium of creatures is greater than one who gives herself to works of penance'.

Yet, no more than St Catherine, did she dispense herself from corporal austerities, which all the Saints have embraced as eagerly as the children of this world seek for comfort and riches. Though her husband and children were watching her, she contrived to deprive herself of drink for days and sometimes weeks in the hot Roman summer. She ate extremely little and that mostly standing, while serving the others, and taking for herself the worst pieces. She used disciplines and hairshirts, made pilgrimages barefoot, yet never neglected her domestic duties.

It is by such a life as this, of obedience and self-effacement, that miracles are accomplished. One day, when Anne was ill, our Lord appeared to her, took her right hand in his and told her to rise. From that time she suffered almost constant pains in that hand, which increased on Fridays, but, in exchange, she had received the gift of healing. With it, she effected innumerable cures; one of the most famous was that of the Queen of Etruria, Marie-Louise de Bourbon, whom she healed of epilepsy. She also healed souls, and, again like St Catherine, she was a great peacemaker, who loved especially to reconcile families. But what likens her perhaps more than anything else to the great Dominican was her relation with the Papacy. She predicted the return of Pius VII from his captivity at Fontainebleau, she was consulted by him and his successors, particularly by Leo XII and Gregory XVI, who asked her advice daily, and she foretold the election of Pius IX when he was still an unknown missionary priest. It was for the Popes that she most willingly offered her sufferings, and our Lord promised her that while she lived there would be no revolution in Rome.

As her life had been spent in suffering, so her death was preceded by an illness of seven months, during which she was wracked with asthma and rheumatism, while the medical treatment she received increased rather than alleviated her pains. By a strange combination of circumstances she endured her last agony alone, as she had foretold, though her house was full of priests and relatives. When the cause of her beatification was introduced there was an extraordinary array of witnesses. For besides Cardinals and priests there were her husband, her children, her daughter-in-law, all testifying that the mystic who had known the highest regions of divine contemplation and the terrifying depths of the Dark Night, had been an exemplary mother. 'I have always found her docile and submissive like a lamb', said Domenico, and 'she arranged everything so sweetly that we did what she wanted in spite of ourselves'. It is one of the marvels of grace that, while the great ones of the world generally lose in stature when observed too closely, the Saints seem more admirable the more intimately they are known.



Yet even in the annals of sanctity it is a rare case that perfection should be recognized by a hot-tempered husband and a domineering daughter-in-law. It is a triumph of love—for the mystic life is nothing else but the full flowering of charity—a charity that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things and endureth all things, and is finally made perfect in the Beatific Vision where both faith and hope are left behind.

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## A LETTER ON TEMPTATIONS AGAINST PURITY\*

BY

FERDINAND VALENTINE, O.P.

Dear David,

You have asked whether unclean thoughts which seem to saturate your mind, even in time of prayer, are due to the devil. Before I can answer this question you will have to know something about the devil's method and scope. Not a pleasant subject, I warn you.

First of all the devil cannot directly control the human mind and will. He has no means of getting inside a man's soul; this is metaphysically impossible. Should you ever read Marlowe's story of Doctor Faustus, I hope you will bear this in mind: it may be good 'theatre' but it's bad theology. The most we can say about this and similar stories is, as one writer puts it, that they contain a certain symbolic truth, and may be looked upon as the dramatic expression of the possibility of final impenitence. But literally and historically these stories are false.

Let me repeat—the devil cannot directly control the human mind and will, but he can influence them indirectly through the imagination, and even the imagination he affects only indirectly through his power over the loco-motor activity of the body. In other words, he cannot impress upon our imagination something we have never previously experienced: as St Thomas says, he cannot make a man born blind see colour. He can only revive a past experience in the imagination through his power over our

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\* From a forthcoming book, *The Inside of the Cup*, Theophila Correspondence No. 2 (Blackfriars Publications).

bodily organs.<sup>1</sup>

Now man being an organism, all his functions from the lowest to the highest are coordinated and interdependent. When one function is disturbed it reacts on the entire organism. It is a fact of common observation that emotional disturbances can produce physiological changes. We speak of people being speechless with terror or sick with disgust. The emotion of love increases the pulse rate, as in the case of St Philip Neri, whose heart beat was audible during prayer. Again, we speak of people being livid with rage and so on.

Similar reciprocity exists between the *imagination* and certain physiological activities. Digestive processes may interfere with sleep and produce the unpleasant imaginative experience called nightmare. Contrariwise, we are told, that those who habitually surrender to imaginative fears (worry and anxiety) often become chronic dyspeptics. There is also the intimate association between imagination and the physiological functions of sex. The devil's power to reproduce these thoughts and images is indirect, through his influence over our body. Clearly then, David, if the devil cannot produce images directly in the imagination, it follows that his power to tempt us is limited in large measure by our experience; that is, he cannot induce imaginative representations of things, events, sensations, which are not part of our experience; he cannot, in a word, recall to our minds that which we have not lived.<sup>2</sup> Nor must we think that his influence is confined to the visual imagination only. We ourselves can reproduce imaginatively every kind of sense-experience, visual, auditory, motor,

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1 St Thomas Aquinas teaches that angels, both good and bad, can propose intelligible truth to man under the similitudes of sensible things. This simply means that the angels can convey ideas to us by writing, speaking and by any kind of sign. St Thomas goes on to say that the power to reproduce these similitudes is due exclusively to the angels' power over the local-motion of corporeal things. (S.T. I, 110). By the last phrase is meant the angels' power to move material things from one place to another. And so, he concludes, both a good and a bad angel by their own natural power can move the human imagination.

If the power of angels is confined to the movement of material things, how can we conclude that they have, thereby, power also over the imagination?

'Corporeal nature', St Thomas says, 'obeys the angel as regards local-movement so that whatever can be caused by local-movement of bodies is subject to the natural power of the angels. Now it is manifest that imaginative apparitions are sometimes caused in us by the local-movement of animal spirits or humours'. By the 'movement of animal spirits or humours' he means that a disturbance or local movement (i.e., loco-motor activity) of glandular secretions, through angelic agency, can have a reflex influence on our imagination.

He repeats this a little further on: 'An angel changes the imagination, not indeed by the impression of an imaginative form in no way previously received from the senses (for he cannot make a man born blind imagine colour), but by the local-movement of . . . humours'. In other words, the devil cannot impress upon our imagination the picture of something we have never previously experienced. He can only revive a past experience in the imagination through his power over our bodily organs.

2 We have deliberately excluded all reference to Collective Unconsciousness.



tactual, images of taste and of smell. The devil, too, has this power, but indirectly.

You will have noticed that I have said, 'The devil's power is limited in large measure by our experience'. He can also tempt us in other ways; as for example through others already under his influence, as in the case of our first parents: 'And Adam said: The woman thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat'. (*Genesis* 3:6-12.) Or—which is more to the point—in the case of the godless society in which we now live. But, even so, the most effective way of thwarting him is to live prudently, remembering that anything we do here and now can be dangerous in two ways: either in the present or the future. We should be on our guard against those actions which may later on be the cause of grievous temptation, although at the time they may not disturb us. The devil can choose our weakest moments for reviving memories of the past.

A well established law of psychology informs us that any experience, however fleeting, leaves behind it some impression which helps to fashion our characteristic mentality, and can never therefore be completely forgotten; it becomes part of a closely woven mental synthesis. In other words, all experience is stored and affects our mental outlook and character. We should never conclude because we cannot always recall ideas at will (as when we say 'we cannot remember') that these ideas are lost. We cannot find them, but they are there. How often we remember things through some association. Quite trivial apprehensions, like the outline of a tree or the sound of an old-time melody will suddenly stir up memories we thought long since forgotten. Every one of us is the outcome of a history, each event of which may be recoverable.

From this you will realise at once the tremendous possibilities of diabolic suggestion in our own times. We cannot all live like monks in a world within a world. To live we must make contacts, and contacts may contaminate. It behoves us to exercise the utmost vigilance over experience—what we read, what we listen to—to restrain inordinate curiosity. We may say: 'Oh, this or that leaves me quite cold. So it may; but it has, nevertheless, become part of ourselves—'every experience is stored'—and one day it will be recalled, perhaps at the devil's suggestion, at a moment of moral crisis. The past is never forgotten; what seems harmless now may be a source of grievous temptation later on.

Particularly is this true of the major crisis of adolescence; for suggestive and dangerous material passed on through film, radio, literature, evil example and so on may make little impression, say at the age of nine or ten, but it will be remembered several years later; and it is for the latter period we should prepare our children.

Let me offer you this word of advice, David: never willingly

experience at your best what you know may be a source of serious temptation at your worst. Not a very literary maxim perhaps; but it is sound. There are, of course, many things we ought to know or find out as we grow up; but we should always guard against a morbid and sensual curiosity.

We cannot say that all these temptations are caused directly or entirely by the devil. Many of them have a purely biological origin in man's disordered, fallen nature. That is to say, thoughts and images are often associated with, and occasioned by, certain physical conditions which may be brought about either in the ordinary course of nature or by the influence of the devil, or by both.

Whilst we are on this subject, David, let us face the more practical issues. The devil can tempt us in two ways:

(A) EXTERIORLY.<sup>3</sup> First, through other people. He has power over others (that is *indirectly* as we have seen) both to shape their minds and souls; he can bring about an emotional crisis in them which may affect us through contact, and thus hasten a more intense, mutual build up, as, for example, when two ill-humoured people meet and fall out. We may corrupt one another by bad example, and also by evil suggestion—through books, films, conversation and so on.

Hence the importance of good companionship; that is, of like-minded people grouped together by a common interest. Gatherings of *Catholic* youth should for this reason be encouraged, especially at retreats of the right kind.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly through *things*. From the data given in this letter, it may interest you to speculate how far the devil can produce intelligible, external signs. For example: the planchette and other forms of automatic writing, clair-audience and perhaps clairvoyance, speech, noises—such as table-rapping—the mediumistic trance, the assumption of a human body or the likeness of a body (as presumably in the temptations of Christ), smell, buffeting, disease and so on.<sup>5</sup> I am not arguing that these manifestations are always due to the devil. But it is interesting to discover that all the so-called contacts with the other world which feature in the spiritistic seances are covered by the *a priori* conclusions of St Thomas.

<sup>3</sup> May I remind you once again that I am saying 'the devil can' and not 'the devil actually does'. Temptations as we have seen may have other sources, to wit, the world and the flesh. In any case the remedies suggested later on are valid.

<sup>4</sup> You will notice I have underlined *Catholic*. Associations of nominal Catholics are sometimes far from being desirable.

<sup>5</sup> Automatic writing may only be from the subconscious. Note how many literary men attribute their work to a secondary personality, e.g., Barrie and 'McConachie'. Clairvoyance and telepathy are now dignified in psychology by being called 'extra-sensory perception', and are being increasingly studied by psychologists of repute, especially at Cambridge. It is suggested that these are merely natural powers which people have in varying degrees.



The devil influences us:

(B) INTERIORLY. He excites our feelings by his power over loco-motor activities, as we have seen. These feelings or emotions arouse, by autonomic action, associated images and thoughts from our stored experience; these react on the feelings and emotions, which again, in turn, make the images more vivid. This interaction or mutual causality, if not interrupted, gradually builds up a serious temptation inciting us to anger, revenge, impurity and so on. Those struggle most successfully against this build-up who tackle beginnings. This can be done in two ways:

(a) By cutting across the reciprocating activity I have described, by some fresh interest, thus swamping dangerous images by others at once less nocuous and more vivid. For this reason hobbies which offer an easy and compelling interest are helpful and sometimes necessary. The cardinal need, at the beginning of these temptations, is a congenial and satisfying distraction; something we can turn to wholeheartedly.<sup>6</sup>

(b) By the avoidance of anxiety and the relaxation of tension. I want to lay particular stress on this. In our struggle against interior temptations we should not fret or panic. This is one of the golden maxims of St Francis of Sales, as we shall see presently. Anxiety accelerates the emotional crisis, adding fuel to the fire. Even prayer and ejaculations may become so uncontrolled as to defeat their own purpose.

For this reason, too (amongst others), we should never frighten those who are tempted against purity. Sometimes, of course, the threat and fear of hell may move a hardened sinner; but it does nothing but harm to souls of goodwill who are struggling against bad habits for whose inception they are sometimes hardly responsible.

An ordered, peaceful, regular life, with encouragement to collaborate with God's holy will and to make the prayer of loving worship, can work wonders in overcoming temptations against purity. The *discipline of the alarm clock* too, that is prompt, instantaneous rising when called, will give young souls confidence; for remember, that is what they need most of all—confidence in the love and goodness of God, and in themselves.

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6 'If we want to reject a thought, we should rather turn to another. This is not difficult, if we can distract ourselves with fascinating reading or outer activity. If neither is possible, we must turn to an attractive thought-complex, the best being some harmless reverie. Such thoughts should not be of abstract matters demanding close concentration, nor should they be too narrowly limited, otherwise the interest they provide is too fleeting and quickly exhausted and the thought to be suppressed perseveres. In fighting against thoughts, we ought particularly to guard against anxiety and excitement, as they act precisely in the same way as the just-mentioned defence-gestures. (That is a "No!", a "Be-gone!" possibly combined with an additional defensive in the form of a gesture.) For this reason, intense and long-continued prayer is not to be recommended at such times'. (Johannes Lindworsky, S.J., *Psychologie des Aszese*, trans. Emil Heiring, p. 39).

Auto-suggestion can help. The following is the advice of an experienced doctor. In time of actual temptation against purity the person afflicted

'should be taught to lie back with muscles relaxed, breathe slowly and regularly, become as completely relaxed in mind and body as possible, and say to himself, "This temptation is getting less and less. I shall always turn away from it. I shall brush it aside. It is no part of me. I shall never succumb again". If that is said with complete conviction<sup>7</sup> the thing happens. One such treatment may be enough. If not, it should be repeated every night for a week or more'. (*Psychological Methods of Healing*, by William Brown, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.C.P. p. 155.)

The meaning of this simple exercise is not at once apparent and for this reason many who are asked to try it will accuse the author of undue optimism.

In that very excuse is seen the cause of the whole trouble. When human nature is confronted with a moral difficulty of this kind, it is immediately tempted to turn 'I will not' into 'I cannot', or retrospectively—'I just couldn't help myself'. A subjective unwillingness becomes an objective impossibility. 'After all', people will argue, 'how can one be responsible for something one cannot help?' and they begin to explain away their lapses, passing on the blame to upbringing, health, overwork and so on, proudly refusing to acknowledge their sin and face their shame. The first obvious step towards recovery is to admit responsibility and to seek Christ's forgiveness in the sacrament of penance.

The above exercise in auto-suggestion is a deliberate assault on this tendency to explain away our guilt; it does not seek to persuade us to do what is normally impossible and expect some kind of magical deliverance, but simply prevents us from believing that we cannot do what is quite certainly well within our capacity.

Dr Allers is of opinion that few temptations are irresistible. The only exceptions he allows are 'abnormal cases in which the will may really have become enfeebled, as for instance, in a man addicted to the drug habit. It is perhaps true that such a man cannot resist the temptation any more and has to yield to his craving for the poison. But even in these cases there is a remnant of freedom and a chance for recuperation. It is known that even an inveterate habit of this kind may give way under the pressure of some strong emotion; what emotional strain may produce, the will, guided by reason, ought to be able to accomplish. In fact, there are not a few cases in which a man found strength to overcome such a habit. . . The idea of irresistible temptations is

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<sup>7</sup> 'With complete conviction'. Some psychologists do not believe that people can practice auto-suggestion convincingly by themselves, unless they *fully realise* the interdependence of mind and body.

probably altogether wrong; great as the alluring force may be, it still needs the assent of the will for a man to give way to it. But we do, in fact, cede very often to temptations which we cannot, in good conscience, credit with an overwhelming power'. (*Self-Improvement*, by Rudolf Allers. pp. 180-1.)

'God is faithful', says St Paul, 'who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able.' (I *Cor.* 10:13.)

The importance of relaxation as an auxiliary in the spiritual life and particularly in time of temptation against purity can hardly be exaggerated. Contrary to the opinion prevailing in some quarters, tension of body is seldom the outward expression of an indomitable will; nor is muscular tension a suitable defence mechanism against the wiles of the evil one. In fact, experience teaches us the opposite. It is usually the man of quiet determination who wins through, and not the one who makes an outward show of obstinacy, with clenching of teeth and gripping of thumbs. The easiest action wins the race.

Many of us introduce unnecessary strain into our relationship with God, especially at time of prayer. Bodily posture can influence the mind. If we kneel upright, for example, we are more alert and less likely to sleep; and if we join our hands or extend our arms, we assist and express the will's surrender to God. But our prayer should never be *taut*, the body rigid, in an effort to carry the kingdom of heaven by brute force. This tension, far from banishing distractions, invites them, stimulating the imagination. And yet many of us are so accustomed to a sense of strain in our spiritual exercises that we grow uneasy when it is not there and begin to think we are not trying. It would surprise some religious to know that relaxation in the sense in which it is understood in this letter—namely, the *control of tension*—may even prevent them from becoming relaxed religious. How slowly do we learn never to be anxious, not even anxious to be good.

'Anxiety is the soul's greatest enemy', says St Francis of Sales, 'sin excepted. Just as internal disturbance and seditions ruin a commonwealth and incapacitate it from resisting external aggression, so when the heart is anxious and disquieted within itself, it loses the power to preserve those virtues which are already acquired and also the means of resisting the temptations of Satan, who does not fail (as we say) to fish in troubled water.'

'Anxiety proceeds from an ill-regulated desire to be delivered from the evil we experience, or to acquire the good to which we aspire; nevertheless, nothing aggravates evil and hinders good so much as anxiety and perturbation.'

'Therefore, if you earnestly desire to be delivered from some evil, or to attain to some good, above all things calm and tranquillise your mind, and compose your judgment and will; then quietly and gently pursue your aim, adopting suitable



means with some method. When I say *quietly*, I do not mean *negligently*, but without hurry, care or disquietude; otherwise, instead of obtaining what you desire, you will spoil all, and be but the more embarrassed.' (*Devout Life*. Pt IV, Ch. 11.)

Perhaps it would be helpful to develop this theme, David. The sane advice we have quoted has an added significance in our own time. Life today is restless. The motor car, 'plane, telephone, radio and many other inventions and fruits of scientific enquiry add to the general pace of things, helping yet alluring, pretending to rid our lives of drudgery and at the same time increasing the demand upon our nervous energies.

To keep abreast of work many curtail their sleep, stimulate themselves, 'rationalise' life for immediate, maximum output. But for all that, in the midst of the whirl and whirr of an almost universal mechanisation, man remains unalterably organic, subject to the same laws of life as were his forefathers. The machine of its nature loves to move and to accelerate; but there is a limit to man's capacity to expend himself. He must take time to rest and recuperate, have courage patiently to sit back and watch the world go by. 'This the present generation finds difficult. The modern world never sleeps; for man, too, has said, 'Let there be light'. Life after dark is made so attractive. Day merges into day, and the divine rhythm is destroyed. All this has repercussions on man's spiritual life.

Can we wonder that many people are overwrought and exhausted? They seek rest and are unable to find it. How are they to free the human spirit from the dangers of imagination? Should they work still harder, hoping by sheer fatigue to conquer sleep; or should they fight desperately, tensing body and mind to withstand what they imagine to be the onslaught of hell?

The meaning of what I am saying will be quite clear to those souls who find themselves in this dilemma. What advice, then, shall we give them? They are trapped with a loathsome thing from which they would escape and which in some inexplicable way seems part of their disordered physical condition. They want God; they love purity.

I am not pretending that these pages hold the answer to all these problems, David, that would be foolish. There is, however, a line of advice and treatment, or at least of investigation, which undoubtedly helps us to grapple with them more confidently.

I have already suggested that the state of soul created by temptation can and should be tackled indirectly by turning the mind to some congenial and compelling interest. But clearly, of itself, this is not a sufficient answer. At best it is a palliative—an emergency measure in face of an actual assault. It is not enough merely to transfer and redirect the imagination in the hope of checking the build-up of an emotional crisis: *we must also reduce the fever of the physical and mental surge together with the*

vividness of the accompanying images. How can this be done?

'Tests indicate', writes Edmund Jacobson, 'that when you imagine or recall or reflect upon anything, you tense your muscles somewhere, as if you were actually looking or speaking or doing something, but to a much slighter degree. If you relax those particular tensions, you cease to imagine or recall or reflect about the matter in question—for instance, a matter of worry. Such relaxation may be accomplished no less successfully while you are active in your daily affairs than while you are lying down.' (You Must Relax. Edmund Jacobson, M.D., Director of the Laboratory for Clinical Physiology, Chicago.)

This is a brief statement of the principle I am trying to put before you, David. As I reminded you at the beginning of this letter, man is an organism whose functions work interdependently. Just as there is a mutual relationship and reciprocity between the imagination, the emotions and biological processes, a similar interaction may be observed between the imagination, the emotions (such as worry, fear and pleasure) and muscular tensions. By learning, therefore, how to relax these muscular tensions in time of temptation against purity, we have gone a long way to overcoming it altogether,<sup>8</sup> *provided always we have*

<sup>8</sup> On this subject no contemporary psychologist or psychotherapist, in my opinion, speaks with the sane, measured and authentic voice of Jacobson as he explains his methods and lays before us his findings. There can be little doubt of the validity of his conclusions. Let me quote the following:

'Because of reflex connections, the nervous system cannot be quieted except in conjunction with the muscular system. In fact it becomes evident that the whole organism rests as the neuromuscular activity diminishes'. (*Progressive Relaxation*. p. xii.)

'To be excited and to be relaxed are physiological opposites'. (*Ibidem*. p. xv.)

'According to the present clinical and experimental experience up to date, if the patient is shown how to relax the voluntary system there tends later to follow a similar quiescence of the vegetative apparatus. Emotions tend to subside as he relaxes'. (p. 32).

'The subject learns to localise tensions when they occur during nervous irritability and excitement and to relax them away. It is a matter of nervous re-education. . . . Many have never observed the connection between tenseness and nervous excitement, or between relaxation and nervous calm'. (pp. 40, 41.)

'Present results indicate that an emotional state fails to exist in the presence of complete relaxation of the peripheral parts involved'. (e.g., œsophagus in fear, forehead and brow in anxiety.) (p. 218.)

In addition to showing us the interdependence of muscular tension and the emotions Jacobson has demonstrated scientifically that 'imagery diminishes with advancing relaxation of muscles'. The value of this in dealing with impure images is obvious; and although he stresses that visual images only disappear with complete ocular relaxation, the general muscular relaxation he advises, as well as the simpler and more convenient methods of others, sufficiently reduces the intensity of these images by dispersing the emotional condition that caused them.

The main feature of Jacobson's work is careful and untiring scientific inquiry. He puts before us observable scientific data and measurements:

'The results of electrical measurements agree with and confirm the findings that relaxation of specific muscular processes *ipso facto* does away with specific mental activities. Physiology thus provides a method which can be turned to clinical use where it is desired to control certain types of imagination or emotion, including worry and excessive mental activity'. (p. 345).

*the will to do so.* That is what St Francis means when he writes: 'If you earnestly desire to be delivered from some evil, or to attain some good, above all things calm and tranquillise your mind and compose your judgment and will; then gently pursue your aim, adopting suitable means with some method'.

Let me repeat once again; at the onset of temptation the mind should be distracted quietly from the dangerous thought and image. This should be followed *at once* by some method of reducing the vehemence of our emotional condition. Here to hand, then, is a very practical means—relaxation.

To relax is to relieve all muscular tension as completely as possible: a continual letting-go of activities in every part of the body.

'When we say that a person is "tense",' says Doctor Jacobson, 'we mean in popular terms that he is over-alert or highly strung.' (We note this in people who jump at a sudden surprise or in ourselves when we give a start as we are falling off to sleep.) 'When we say that a muscle is tense, we mean that it is contracting, its fibres are shortened. Such tensions make up much of the warp and woof of living. Walking, talking, breathing and all of our activities involve a series of complicated and finely shaded tensions of various muscles. To do away with all such tensions permanently would be to do away with living. This is not our purpose but at times we need to control them, and relaxation is a form of such control.' (*Progressive Relaxation*, p. 35.)

Notice very carefully, the form of control Jacobson advises is what he calls *Differential Relaxation*, which he defines as a 'minimum of tension in the muscles requisite for an act along with the relaxation of other muscles' (p. 83).

There is a world of difference between *holding oneself* quiet and relaxing. Many people come to the end of the day with overstrung nerves, expecting sleeplessness and worse. They toss and turn in an effort to find sleep through comfort. When told to relax, they try to keep still, which only aggravates the trouble.

The tension on the violin string enables it to vibrate; but when it has ceased to vibrate it is still taut. The one means of reducing the tension is by slackening the string in the usual way.

So with the human body, a means has to be discovered, not of keeping it still, but of *finding stillness and peace through the release of tension*. The approach to this state especially at night, is threefold:

(a) We should not try to overcome discomfort in an effort to find comfort, but we should seek a means for undergoing, that is, a *reason for accepting*, the discomfort. A dripping tap, for instance, may prevent us from sleeping; but it will disturb us only in so far as our minds give it a nuisance value. There is no reason why a regular, rhythmic noise should keep us awake. On



the contrary, we should normally expect it to lull us to sleep, like camping by the sea. The reason for keeping awake is manufactured by our own minds. That is the trouble. There is no end to this process once we let ourselves go. What needs to be changed is not the drip but our attitude towards it. We may, for instance, consider each drop of water as an act of love of God. By doing this we make it *desirable*, that is, we discover a reason for accepting and welcoming it. We make a friend of the water.

The same may be said of all similar discomforts. Take another example which will carry us a step further. Many of us have spent uncomfortable nights under canvas. The ground was hard. We could no longer find sleep through comfort. But once we had readjusted our minds to accept the normal discomfort attaching to such conditions, how comfortably we slept and how refreshed we were in the morning. There is no mystery about this, other than that we had discovered the secret of relaxation. Those who seek complete comfort are rarely able completely to relax. Comfort tends to fixate and increase residual, muscular tension because it helps us to relieve the discomfort of such tension without fully relaxing it.

We begin to understand now why masters of the spiritual life encourage us to sleep hard. They are not here concerned with mortification as such, but rather with a healthy attitude towards sleep. We are much better able to relax when we have educated the mind to accept a certain degree of discomfort. The reason behind this acceptance is the Cross and the example of our Lord, who had not whereon to lay his head. The fruit of this relaxation is an ascendancy over the imagination.

'The fact is', writes Edmund Jacobson, 'that when you move about in bed, seeking comfort, it is you doing so; nothing compels you. You are led to it by your own desire and habits; that is all.

'Your mistake is that you are ever trying to become a little more comfortable, or to avoid discomfort.

'“That is natural”; you reply.

'But I am reminded of the lesson of Jesus—the paradox that only by sacrificing your life can you save it. Only by sacrificing your comfort for the moment, when you lie awake, relaxing in the face of discomfort, can you eventually become comfortable and go to sleep. It is your persistent effort to better yourself that results in failure; your effort is tension.' (*You Can Sleep Well*. pp. 40-43.)

Elsewhere he says: 'When you feel like moving some particular member relax it instead, until the inclination to move disappears'. (*Progressive Relaxation*. p. 402.)

(b) We should prepare for sleep, deliberately. It requires considerable skill to bring a train into a railway terminus. How gradually and almost imperceptibly it comes to rest. At night we

should slow down the tempo of our living, avoid disturbing anxieties and problems, exciting literature and turn to God with loving preoccupation.

(c) Sins against purity are often a kind of ritual of self-love. The soul has been thrown back upon itself through some form of isolation; it is in love with itself, talks to and seeks to possess itself. Communicability is the divinely appointed condition of life; but this type of soul is communicable to none but itself. That is the root of the trouble. A radical cure must first solve the problem of loneliness and isolation. This can be done best and most safely through the prayer of loving-worship and an awareness of God's indwelling. Worship begets peace; it is the true solvent of all tension and strain.

*The best safeguard, therefore, against temptations to impurity is to foster the will-to-be-pure through the love of purity. This love cannot come through thought and meditation alone, but is the fruit of a certain contact with God in his Eucharistic presence and through the prayer of loving worship. 'O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.'* (Ps. 33:9.)

But this simple prayer, alas, has little in common with a flurry of spiritual exercises squeezed in anyhow to make room for other urgent demands on our time. The truth is that much of the modern tension has invaded our spiritual life, in many cases destroying the attraction to prayer. The problem is exactly how to ease this tension.

There are two difficulties in setting down a satisfactory method of relaxation:

(a) Objectively the maximum results take time. Jacobson, for instance, writes: 'Many people can arrange for an hour of rest at noon'. That is part of the trouble—they *can't*. Other authorities, however, agree that there are great individual differences in the amount a person can or will release in any one period. The subject himself should therefore decide how long to relax. *However short a time is taken repetition is the key to success.* Relaxation faithfully repeated soon convinces us of the need for further relaxation.

(b) The second difficulty is that those who need relaxation most like it least.

'It is painful to see a man—thin and pale from the excessive nervous force he has used, and from a whole series of attacks of nervous prostration—speak with contempt of "this method of relaxation". It is not a "method" in any sense except that in which all laws of nature are methods. No one invented it, no one planned it; . . . to call it a new idea or method is as absurd as it would be, had we carried our tension so far as to forget sleep entirely, for someone to come with a "new method" of sleep in order to bring us into a normal state again!' (Cf. *Relaxation in Everyday Life*. Boome and Richardson, p. 27.)

## HOW TO RELAX

*Exercises employed in the Speech Therapy Department of the Notre Dame Clinic, Glasgow*

Relaxation exercises should be undertaken every night before going to sleep and for periods of a few minutes during the day.

(a) On returning from business at the end of the day: *Go to your room and have 'five minutes'*. Lie on your bed in as comfortable a position as possible—face upwards, eyes closed, feet slightly apart, arms by sides, a low pillow under the head—and 'let go' as if you were a rag doll. (As a sofa or bed may sag many people prefer to lie on the floor; some find a small pillow at the waistline helpful, but this is not necessary).

The object you have in mind is 'a continual letting go of activities in every part of the body' and therefore the key-words are: 'Let go—relax—do nothing—cease activity—use no effort'. After a few moments make a quiet review of the different parts of the body in turn—fingers, hands, arms, feet, etc.—letting go each part still further. As you become more relaxed your breathing will become easier and deeper.

You should now review very quietly the tensions in your head and face. Let the muscles of your neck relax, pay particular attention to your mouth, teeth, eyes, forehead, 'loosening-up' as much as possible, remembering to keep the eyes closed. Five minutes (or longer, according to the time at your disposal) from time to time during the day or even once a day will make the greatest difference to your poise. The same procedure should be gone through at night before going to sleep. If you are restless and want to move about resist the temptation and relax instead.

(b) The above exercises are for complete relaxation; but a fair amount of release may be achieved during the day at odd moments, e.g., coming home in the bus, let the seat bear your full weight and give your feet a rest. Relax each part of the body as much as a sitting position will allow. Is your mouth set in a hard, straight line? Are you biting your pipe? Are you frowning? Are your eyes screwed up? Is your tongue cleaving to the roof of your mouth? All this is waste of energy. (Why leave the damper out when you don't need the oven?) Watch yourself also at the bus-stop. Do you move from one foot to the other, clear your throat, look repeatedly at your watch and expend your vital force in a hundred other unnecessary ways?

'It is possible so to train your body that the daily output of nervous energy is reduced to a minimum and this without loss of efficiency. On the contrary, the result of eliminating surplus tension is to *increase* efficiency. The surplus tension only interferes with what you are trying to do. The moment you allow yourself to perform any action from a basis of muscular ease you will find that you are doing it better and with less fatigue.' (*Relaxation in Everyday Life*. Boome and Richardson, p. 20.)



It is sometimes objected that methodical relaxation tends to make us self-regarding. A moment's thought will show how baseless is this fear. It is the self-centred life that makes people anxious and apprehensive. 'They have not called upon the Lord; then have they trembled for fear where there was no fear.' (*Ps.* 13:5; cf. also *Lev.* 26:36; *Proverbs* 10:29; 28:1; *Wisdom* 17:10.) On the other hand, the more we try to live for God's honour and glory the more we lean on him in loving trust. That surely is the lesson of the Sermon on the Mount: 'Your Father knoweth that you need all these things . . . be not solicitous . . . O ye of little faith'. (*Matt.* 5.) The saint, therefore, being of all people the most detached is the least likely to accumulate unnecessary tensions.

But we are not all saints; we cannot so easily translate our lives in terms of other-worldly values. We may strive after a sense of God's presence and seek to collaborate with him in all things: but how far we fall short of this ideal. For long stretches of the day we forget him. Worldly and selfish motives begin to dominate our minds, creeping in stealthily as though without the continual thought of him we gravitated in spite of ourselves to a lower level. At such times we feel the need of readjustment—coordination; we look forward to our prayer. But do we always find these things in our prayer and so win through to peace of mind and soul? Sometimes, of course, yes; but all too often we are conscious of waging a losing battle, as though the soul were dishevelled, breathless and never quite prepared for the struggle of tomorrow. What stands in the way? The very tensions of which we have been speaking—tensions due to the abnormal strain and stress of modern life. Relaxation in the Christian sense is stripping one's self of *self* for the presence of God; undoing the things that bind us to *self*; a deliberate self-readjustment for God. It is an essential part of the act of the presence of God. He reaches down and we reach up.

If Jacobson can write: 'Cultivation of the muscle-sense does not encourage morbid self-consciousness' (*Progressive Relaxation*, p. xvi), how little we need fear when through this method of relaxation we seek repose in God's abiding presence. It is my firm conviction that many of us may find ourselves morally at fault by not doing so, especially in time of temptation.

To conclude, I cannot resist the following quotation:

'One of the best and most easily available means of acquiring that initial loosening that leads to deeper relaxation is laughter' (Boome and Richardson. *loco cit.* p. 51).

Arnold Lunn in *The Good Gorilla* (p. 64) makes one of his characters say that 'Holy Church is represented out of all proportion among the ranks of the humorists', and goes on to show that this is one of the proofs of her sanctity!

So let us place humour next to godliness and learn to laugh kindly at self as well as at others—including the devil.

There we must end, David. I am sorry this letter had to be so impersonal; but obviously the subject would permit of no other treatment.

God bless you.

FERDINAND VALENTINE, O.P.

P.S.—Cf. *The Dark Night of the Soul* (Bk. I, ch. 4), in which St John of the Cross speaks specifically of temptations against purity during prayer.

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#### REVIEWS

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ST TERESA OF JESUS. Translated and Edited by Professor E. Allison Peers. (Sheed & Ward; 3 volumes; £3 3s. 0d.)

The only adverse criticism of any weight to be brought against this new edition of St Teresa's works is that it is as yet *not* complete. Professor Peers seems ready to postpone the translation of the *Letters* indefinitely; and he has reason for so doing as they were the latest to be edited in the Stanbrook edition and there is some hope of discovering further Teresian correspondence following the recent Spanish upheavals. However, the *Letters* would have given the final touches to the picture of the saint which emerges from the accurate and sensitive translation of her own words. No picture by brush or pen could bring St Teresa to life in the way that a translation, and in particular this outstanding work of scholarship, can do. Professor Peers has given us a scientific

edition with elucidatory footnotes and comprehensive indices. His work has been primarily for the Teresan scholar, and having attained success in this high ideal he has provided a basic work for all lovers of St Teresa great and small. Of particular value is the italicising in *The Way of Perfection* of all the passages which appeared in the first draft but were later excised by the saint. This device of itself reveals some of St Teresa's characteristics very forcibly, for the passages later omitted by her are mostly of a personal nature speaking with directness to God or to her sisters of her own wide experience. Certainly all her writing is stamped with this direct call on experience. In fact almost more than any other saint, Teresa illustrates the dictum, *Quidquid recipitur secundum modum recipientis recipitur*; for although grace is bestowed on all the elect, God does not issue it like a ticket of admission to heaven or pour it into the soul like water into some celestial pot. Each is given grace according to his own special character, as musical talent in a tempestuous Beethoven or in a contemplative Bach. We say, That is Bach's music, this Beethoven's. In the same way we must say, This is Teresa's holiness, that St Francis's. The character of each modifies grace so profoundly that it appears sometimes in contrasts, as with St Simon Stylites and St Thomas Aquinas, the Little Flower and St Athanasius. All these holy ones share the divine life, have the blessed Trinity dwelling in their hearts; but different ages, tempers and nationalities translate this divine life into a thousand lives.

From St Teresa's works we may perhaps gather two aspects of her character, one of which shows the modification of grace through her nature, the other of her nature through grace. The first of these is her essentially feminine sanctity, which shines as a beacon light in these dark days of the abuse of womanhood. She was no feminist, but she was intensely and consciously feminine: 'When thou wert in the world, Lord, thou didst not despise women, but didst always help them. . . . Thou didst find more faith and no less love in them than in men. . . .' (*Way of Perfection*, c. 2.) The translator of St John of the Cross and of St Teresa has had an excellent opportunity of comparing the masculine and the feminine approach to the heights of union with God. He finds them essentially the same (vol. i, p. xxii), but while her little friar is objective, logical and crystal clear, St Teresa writes throughout in an autobiographical setting, appealing directly to her own experience—'In nothing that she ever wrote could her strong individuality ever be concealed' (vol. i, p. xiv.) The *Life*, the *Way of Perfection*, and the *Interior Castle* are in reality one continuous work built up on her own history. 'Alas that one cannot do more to give the English reader the unforgettable effect of intimacy with this woman of the 16th century still living and breathing in the 20th as she writes in her own language' (vol. i, p. xxi.) But her directness and impetuosity, her effective, womanly practicality



throughout this extended autobiography come through the modern language and convince us that grace, while it gives the gifts of fortitude and understanding, does not give to a woman the soul of an Amazon. Concrete and intuitive, St Teresa has the great capacity for endurance and suffering which brings new life, new children, a new family which now peoples the earth in islands of sane contemplation. She is *Mater spiritualium*, a mother of mystics.

The trenchant style of the saint also reveals the active, practical element of her femininity. And here I think we may say that grace modified her natural bent in remarkable ways. It seems certain, in reading her life and writings, that she was naturally inclined to an active life. The two great works of her life—Reform and Foundations—occupy so much of her later years that we may be justified in seeing in her a contemplative who had been born an active, practical woman. Till the last she is constantly busy, and even her childish desires to be martyred or to build a hermitage suggest that the going to be martyred was as important as the death itself, that the building of the hermitage was as attractive as the contemplation within it. For twenty years she lived a more or less active life in the unreformed convent. Then came the turmoil of the reform and the constant travel and worry involved in the foundations; between this was a short period of rest, but then she is writing these works and with such speed that she has no time to read what she has written. She seems to be always on the go, not simply towards the end of her life as with saints like St Catherine, but from the first. She did indeed reach contemplative prayer before her final conversion, and she does consider herself as a contemplative (compare vol. ii, 72 and 129). It is as though God would not allow her to stray into activism, but compelled her to come into the solitude of contemplative prayer. God himself held her by the hand (vol i, p. 38) and led her to contemplation. But he did not suppress her practical common sense. On the contrary, he sanctified it and so made it possible for her to enjoy the highest states of contemplative prayer without losing her natural tendency to be efficient and practical.

There are a thousand noteworthy points arising from reading this excellent translation, but there is no space here to deal with them. The translation itself is refreshing, coming as it does in the present period of putting into 'modern English' the great classics from the Bible downwards. It reads easily and without any affectation. There is no attempt to be 'clever' so that the translation flows with simplicity and accuracy. It is based on the definitive edition of the saint's works published in Spain by P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, whose editions appeared after the previous translations had already been made and published. The present work, then, aims at being the definitive translation of St Teresa and it is difficult to imagine its being superseded in this

country for a century or two, until our language becomes more degenerate than it already is. C. P.

UNITY OCTAVE SERMONS (Graymoor Press, Peekskill, N.Y.).

One of the first fruits of the Church Unity Octave was the conversion in 1909 of the (Anglican-American) Society of the Atonement, a Franciscan congregation of regular tertiaries established at Graymoor founded by Fr Paul Francis, who was, too, the originator of the Octave, which has by this spread throughout the world, enjoying the blessing of Popes and bishops as well as the support of religious leaders of many denominations. It is appropriate, therefore, that the Graymoor Press should publish a collection of sermons and addresses delivered in Washington during the Octave celebrations of 1946.

Following the intentions of the various days, this collection is welcome as an American contribution to a movement which has, as yet, had too little support among English-speaking Catholics. For our part, we are glad to find that the notable celebration of the Octave in Oxford in 1942 (proceedings published as *Prayer and Unity*, Blackwell, 5s.) is acknowledged for the inspiration it most certainly was for those who took part in it.

There was never a greater need for prayer for Christian unity than now. 'The reunion of East and West', said Fr Victor White in 1942 (and his words are quoted by Fr Gillis, C.S.P., in his sermon), 'of the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Evangelical Bodies; the integration within one brotherhood of Jewry and Islam, and of the teeming millions of the heathen is, humanly speaking, a fantastic enterprise'. All the more therefore should we pray, trusting that our Lord, who has prayed that 'they all may be one', will inspire our prayers, and hasten the coming of the unity he wills. I.E.

LE MYSTERE DE L'UNITE. JEU LITURGIQUE. (Couvent des Pères Dominicains, 44 Rue Rabelais, Angers.)

It has been justly said that the arts have yet to be enlisted in the apostolate of Unity. The painter, writer, musician or even the designer of posters who will bring home to all and sundry the scandal of disunity and the cry of the Good Shepherd has yet to be discovered.

But a Dominican of Angers has explored the possibilities of dramatising the eirenic message with remarkable success. His *jeu liturgique* is in the tradition of the medieval mysteries in that it is very largely scriptural and designed to be performed in Church. But it could not have been composed, let alone performed, in any other decade.

Presented for the first time in the Dominican Church at Angers during the Unity Octave of January 1945, it was performed in no less than eight other towns in 1946 and is due to be given in the Cathedral of Lyons this coming January. It is performed in the

choir, with the aid of acolytes and music. The three main scenes unfold a number of tableaux representing the unity of the Church, its dismemberment through sin, and the recall to Unity. Choral recitation and group movement, on the lines popularised by the Grail in pre-war days, enhance the apt selections from both the Old and the New Testaments. It is plain that Père Kopf has started a most fruitful development, for his *jeu* is capable of being adapted to other uses, either lowlier, as in schools, or more ambitious, at a Eucharistic Congress. Perhaps the Grail will even consider giving it at the Albert Hall? Meanwhile it is to be hoped that an English translation may soon be available.

HERBERT KELDANY

THE EPISTLES OF ST CLEMENT OF ROME AND ST IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, tr. James Kleist, S.J., Ph.D. (*Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. I.* The Newman Bookshop, Westminster, Maryland, U.S.A. \$2.50.)

The Catholic University of America is doing great service to English-speaking Catholics by publishing new translations of the Fathers of the Church. The series, *Ancient Christian Writers*, under the general editorship of J. Quasten, S.T.D., and J. C. Plumpe, Ph.D., is addressed 'to all who remain conscious of a most precious ancient heritage, the works of the Fathers; and it purposes to make these works available in a new English translation that is at once faithful to the original message and intelligible to the reader of our century'. It is intended to publish not only the Greek and Latin Fathers, but also Christian Oriental writings, many of which have not yet appeared in English versions, and which in part have only recently been discovered. Its aim is to provide accurate and readable translations of the texts: it does not set out to discuss detailed problems connected with them. Consequently the series will appeal to the general reader rather than the specialist: though at the same time the translations are based on the most recent and trustworthy texts, and the collection aims at combining philological precision with theological understanding.

The first epistle of St Clement to the Corinthians has always been held in high esteem, so that many early writers included it in the canonical books of the New Testament. It is a pastoral letter from the Church in Rome to the Church in Corinth, reprimanding the latter gently, but firmly, for the dissensions which have occurred. The restrained and formal style of Clement contrasts sharply with the impetuous and enthusiastic letters of the martyr Ignatius, though the doctrines, representing both West and East, are in close accord.

Ignatius wrote his seven letters, six to Christian communities, and one to St Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, while he was under arrest, and travelling to Rome to his death. They are individual and intensely personal in style, the letters of one who was on fire with love, love of Christ, and love of his one and indivisible Church.



Though he is writing as early as 110 A.D., Ignatius insists constantly upon loyalty to tradition, and a loving obedience to the bishops who are vicars of Christ. (e.g. *Smyrn.* 8.) The Church is one body, and the food of that body is the Eucharist, 'for one is the Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with his Blood. ...' (*Philad.* 4).

'Faith and love are paramount—the greatest blessings in the world', and Ignatius, also called God-bearer, writes to Rome, beseeching the Christians there to show him no unseasonable kindness, by depriving him of the martyrdom he so dearly desires, the martyrdom which will prove him to be a true believer, when he is no longer seen by the world—for it is through death, and being hidden from the world, that the clear vision of goodness comes. 'God's wheat I am', he writes, 'and by the teeth of wild beasts I am to be ground, that I may prove Christ's pure bread'.

The message of Ignatius is one of love and fearless courage; it is as alive and inspiring today as it was to the Christians to whom Ignatius wrote. The volume under review gives explanations in the introductions and notes sufficient for an appreciation of the texts: and then it lets Clement and Ignatius each bear witness in his own way to the teaching, the unity, and the inspiration of the Church of Christ.

VALENTINE WOOD, O.P.

THIS TREMENDOUS LOVER, By M. Eugene Boylan, O.C.R. (Mercier Press; 12s. 6d.)

This is an excellent book, most valuable to all readers, both lay and religious. The style is easy and the theological applications carefully weighed and sober, particularly when treating of our Lady's place in the Mystical Body, and completely free from the excesses of some modern writers. Holy Scripture is aptly used, and the selections from papal utterances are well chosen.

The author's main concern is the spiritual life of the individual Catholic and his partnership with Christ. He has written for everybody, for the layman as well as for the priest and religious. He applies the traditional thesis upheld for so many years by Fr Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., by maintaining that all are called to perfection, (p. 181) and that the summit of sanctity is open to every Christian. (p. 311.) In support of this he happily quotes the words of Pope Pius XI in the Encyclical on Marriage, 'All men of every condition, in whatever honourable walk of life they may be, can and ought to imitate that most perfect example of holiness placed before men by God, namely Christ our Lord, and by God's grace arrive at the summit of perfection, as is proved by the example of many saints'.

He stresses the importance of the interior life for the individual Christian and for the Catholic body as a whole. 'The only hope for civilization in its present crisis is that Catholics succeed in leavening society. Their success in doing so depends primarily not on

their organization but on their interior life and personal love of God. Once Catholic Action puts the emphasis on the 'Action', and forgets the real meaning of 'Catholic' which in essence is the result of union with Christ, then failure of Catholic Action has begun'. (p. xi).

Perhaps Fr Boylan is at his best in his three chapters on prayer, and when he writes about daily spiritual reading. His golden rule for prayer is 'to pray the way one finds best'. (p. 85). The dispositions for prayer are 'the dispositions for healthy membership of Christ: faith, hope, charity, humility, and submission to God's will'. (p. 87). In spiritual and religious formation he inculcates complete liberty of spirit in all matters that are not of obligation. He does not agree 'with those who would have lay people live like religious, out of touch with their surroundings. They are members of society, they have their place in it and their relations to it, and they have quite a legitimate interest in it'. (p. 101).

'Regular reading of a suitable sort plays a more and more important part in the life of Catholics today, and that for the educated at least it is well-nigh essential for their progress if not for their salvation'. (p. 101). 'The grown and mature mind of a grown person cannot be expected to re-adopt the mental habits and immature outlook of a child, or to renew juvenile tastes. The Catholic cannot afford to be satisfied with what has been learnt at school. The proper foundation for true devotion and prayer is dogma. And there is much dogma put clearly and applied in the most practical way in these pages. 'Christianity is not a set of rules; it is a Person—the Person we call Christ'. (p. 217). Doctrine presupposes some idea of Catholic philosophy. Often theology is read by the laity exclusively from the point of view of apologetic argument, whereas it should also furnish a dogmatic foundation of devotion. (p. 106). But 'common sense can never be left aside at any part of the spiritual life'. (p. 108).

It is suggested that there should be three practices instead of one, of reading, reflection, and prayer. Many books written as 'meditations' are 'more fit to be included in the list of spiritual reading'. (p. 120). In an appendix there is a well-selected list of books. There are also timely instructions on the Sacraments.

We venture to offer some hints for another edition. Some pruning would make the reading less heavy. A long introduction and a preface are a little top-heavy. It is doubtful whether so much indulgence need be given to recapitulations. And certainly an index at the end would help the diligent reader to recapture some of the ideas which have particularly impressed him.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

THE PRIEST OF TODAY: His Ideals and his Duties. By Thomas O'Donnell, C.M. (Browne and Nolan; 10s. 6d.)

This work was first published forty years ago, and is now pre-



sented in a revised form and brought up to date. It will be especially useful and instructive to the priest not long ordained who is entering on his formative years in the midst of a parochial apostolate. Above all he must have a high appreciation of his priestly vocation, and must not allow his spiritual life to deteriorate by ill-measured activity and at the expense of prayer and study. He must be a man of prayer, a man of study, a man of culture. A man who is rustic in his thought and behaviour will be hampered in his work for souls, and will arouse dislike in those with whom he comes in contact. When the curbs of discipline are removed it is easy to become idle. Idleness often takes the form of neglect of reading. It is not sufficient for the priest to read for reading's sake or in a haphazard fashion. 'A priest should apply himself earnestly to the science of human conduct and qualify himself daily more and more to be a teacher and a guide to others'. (p. 15). He should as a professional man fortify himself with principles rather than with casuistry, being studious in sacred learning, and alive to modern trends of thought.

Almost every topic within the range of a priest's life and work is touched on in this book. There are some points upon which there may well be a difference of opinion. We wonder, for instance, whether it need be taken as a general rule that 'writing is essential for a young preacher' (p. 165). There are subjects too which if not treated fully had better be left alone.

In speaking of the use of an invalid marriage, which is patient of a much wider treatment, it is said that in an extreme emergency 'the purely *ecclesiastical* impediment that originally stood in the way of a valid marriage ceases'. (p. 110). Whatever is meant by 'impediment' here, the statement is inadmissible notwithstanding Lehmkuhl and Palmieri.

We have not noticed that due place is given to the study of languages in the life of a priest. Undoubtedly he is the better equipped for the performance of his duties the less rusty he is specially in Latin, Greek and French, with which he presumably will have had some acquaintance in his seminary days. Thus although there are a number of scattered phrases of Latin throughout these pages, there is no suggestion in the reading list in an appendix that the reader should know any language but his own. Such limitation in the sphere of reading can only tend to insulate the clerical mind.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

*Les Editions Du Cerf* have produced an attractive French translation of Abbot Vonier's *Christianus*. This is the third of the Abbot's works in this series (*l'Eau Vive*) which shows the demand on the other side of the Channel for these satisfactory popularisations of St Thomas's theology. (Blackfriars Publications; 6s. 6d.)



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